

# Strategic Deterrent Forces

## A Foundation for 21st-Century National Security



U.S. Navy Admiral Cecil D. Haney visited Los Alamos in January 2014. The then-newly appointed Commander of U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) toured the Laboratory and was briefed on the Lab's national security mission. "I've been really impressed," he told employees. "It's clear to me that the work we

do collectively—work associated with deterrence and assurance—along with the business of space threats, cyber threats, missile defense, and combating weapons of mass destruction...we're teammates in this."

**As we draw down our nuclear deterrent forces, the remaining systems must be safe, secure, effective, and ready.**

As STRATCOM commander, Admiral Haney works to ensure a safer world through better national security. On January 22, 2016, he delivered the keynote address for the Center for Strategic and International Studies in his native Washington, D.C. His talk, titled "Strategic Deterrent Forces As a Foundation to 21st-Century National Security," is summarized as follows:

### A Complex World

The global security environment is complex, dynamic, and volatile—perhaps more so than at any time in our history. Just a glance at headlines today will point to efforts supporting the coalitions in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, as we continue to address a campaign against terrorists including Islamic State (aka ISIL) and other violent extremists. Malicious cyber and counter-space activities are increasing both in number and sophistication. At the same time, we have nation-states such as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran whose behavior on the international stage warrants our attention.

A number of nation-states are developing, sustaining, and/or modernizing their nuclear forces and supporting capabilities.

Meanwhile, we continue to work toward meeting the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) limits.

### A New Start

The United States has reduced its nuclear weapons stockpile by 85 percent relative to the Cold War peak. Instead of dozens of different delivery systems, we are well on our way to only four [intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), cruise missiles, and the B61 bomb].

The U.S. Air Force has eliminated all non-operational ICBM silos and is in the process of placing 50 [of our 450] deployed ICBMs into non-deployed status. All ICBMs deploy only a single warhead—they are no longer armed with multiple, independently targetable warheads.

The Air Force is also converting almost half of its nuclear-capable B-52 bombers to conventional-weapons-only bombers. The U.S. Navy is converting [to non-nuclear] four SLBM launch tubes [out of 24] on each of the 14 deployed Ohio-class nuclear ballistic missile submarines, thus removing 56 launch tubes from accountability.

The benefit of the New START is that it engenders stability by maintaining rough equivalency in size and capability. However, in order to maintain strategic stability as we draw down our nuclear deterrent forces, the remaining systems must be safe, secure, effective, and ready.

Clearly, there's a lot going on. The reality is that the strategic environment continues to increase in complexity. Unlike the bipolar world of the Cold War, today's multipolar world includes nation-states and non-state actors that are more akin to multiplayer, concurrent, potentially intersecting games of chess, challenging regional and global security dynamics.

**I drive a vehicle that is 13 years old—old by auto standards but a real "spring chicken" by our nuclear-deterrent-delivery system standards.**

### The Bedrock

I hope you would agree with me that achieving comprehensive deterrence and assurance rests on a whole-of-government approach. Foundational to this approach is America's nuclear deterrent—a synthesis of dedicated sensors, assured command and control, the triad of delivery systems, nuclear weapons, enabling infrastructure, trained



Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians explain the MK II Talon robot to Admiral Haney. To learn more about EOD training at Los Alamos, see “The Hurt-Locker School” on page 3. (Photo: U.S. Navy)

and ready people, and treaties and non-proliferation activities. All remain essential to our national security and continue providing a stabilizing force in the geopolitical fabric of the world.

We’ve made tremendous progress throughout the nuclear deterrent enterprise—from oversight and investment to personnel and training. Make no mistake: U.S. STRATCOM is a ready force, capable of delivering comprehensive war-fighting solutions for our commander in chief.

### Modernizing the Force

Most of our aging delivery systems and their support infrastructure will be extended decades beyond their original expected service life—and must be replaced in the 2025–2030 time frame. Our ICBMs, B-52s, and Ohio-class submarines were designed and fielded in the 1960s, ’70s, and ’80s.

By comparison, I drive a vehicle that is 13 years old. That’s old by auto standards but a real “spring chicken” compared

to our nuclear-deterrent-delivery system standards. My car is still reliable but requires more maintenance to keep her that way. Imagine the maintenance logs of our B-52s after 60 years, ICBMs after more than 45 years, and the Ohio-class submarines after 30 years of extended service.

Each leg of the triad provides a hedge against technical problems or changes in the security environment, so the triad must have effective weapons [in addition to effective delivery systems]. For example, the B61 nuclear bomb’s life-extension program is needed to continue enhancing the credibility of our security commitments to our allies. The new Long-Range Standoff Missile must preserve existing military capability in the face of evolving threats.

### Time is Running Out

We are fast approaching the point where we will put at risk our safe, secure, effective, and ready nuclear deterrent, potentially jeopardizing strategic stability. We must not let





An Air Force B-52 Stratofortress bomber aircraft. The youngest B-52 is 54 years old. (Photo: U.S. Air Force)

our deterrence capabilities be determined by a failure to sustain and modernize our forces. This is critical in a global security environment where it is clear that, for the foreseeable future, other nations are placing high priority on developing, sustaining, and modernizing their nuclear deterrent forces.

Delaying the development and fielding of any of these programs would unacceptably increase risk to our nation's strategic deterrent capabilities. Equally, if not more important, delaying would directly affect our credibility and ability to deter and assure.

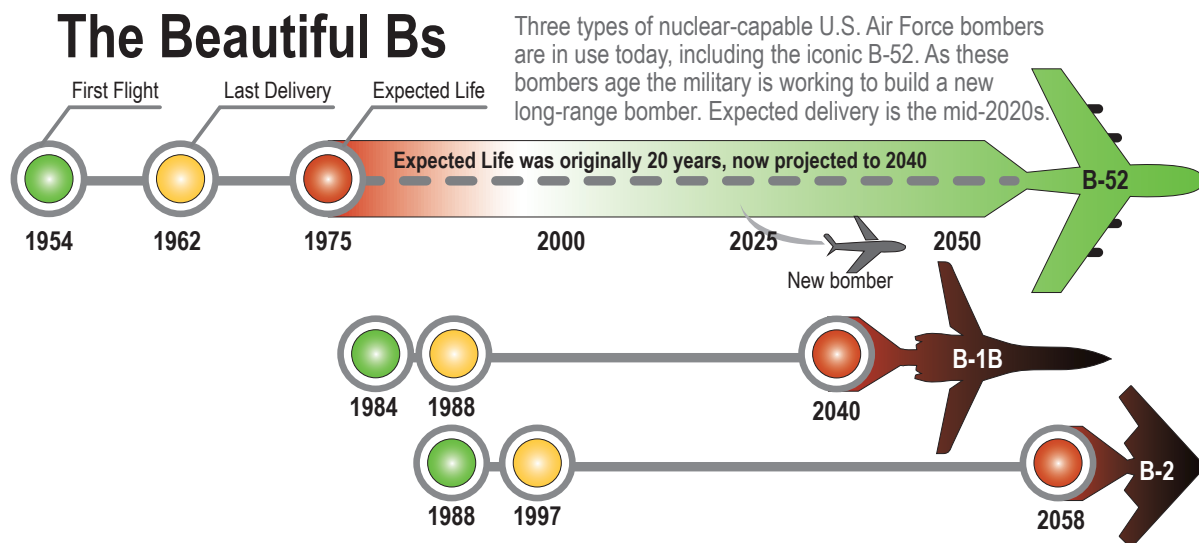
We are out of time. Sustainment is a must. Recapitalization is a requirement.

Although many talk about sustaining and modernizing our nuclear enterprise in terms of cost (which is important in this fiscal environment), it is imperative that we expand the conversation to seriously consider the value derived from investment over the long-term.

**We must modernize the force—including our people—to ensure this force remains capable of delivering strategic stability and foundational deterrence well into the future.**

Our budget has a deterrent value of its own and reflects our nation's commitment to our deterrent strategy. If we are to meet future challenges, we must have a synchronized campaign of investments supporting the full range of military operations that secure our national security objectives across the globe.

Our choice is not between keeping the current forces or replacing them. Rather, the choice is between replacing those forces or risking not having them at all. Without



timely investment, we risk degrading the deterring and the stabilizing effect of a strong and credible nuclear deterrent force. Similar to how the United States analyzes the budgets of other countries, our adversaries pay close attention to how we back up our words with resources. To that end, budget stability is integral to our strategic stability.

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In much the same way we sustain and modernize our platforms and weapons, we must also sustain and modernize our workforce. We must invest in the future of the professionals, both civilian and military, who operate, maintain, secure, engineer, and support our nuclear enterprise.

We need individuals who are willing to develop and stretch their intellect well beyond one-dimensional problems. We need “chess players” who can operate in a multi-dimensional environment with multiple activities taking place simultaneously, on a board where they may not fully understand the rules by which our adversaries are playing.

### **Can We Afford Not to Modernize?**

There is no doubt that for 70 years, thanks in part to our credible nuclear forces, the United States has deterred great-power war against nuclear-capable adversaries. But we can’t continue to rely on that. We must modernize the force—including our people—to ensure this force remains capable of delivering strategic stability and foundational deterrence well into the future.

There are many who voice concern regarding affordability of the recapitalization programs, but my answer is simple: In this era of explicit and emerging security threats to our nation and its allies, how can we afford *not* to? ✦

*~Admiral Cecil D. Haney,  
Commander, U.S. Strategic Command*



*The current phase of the B61 life-extension program (LEP) is expected to be completed during summer 2016. Once completed, the B61 LEP will provide continuing assurance of the safety, reliability, and effectiveness of a unique and critical component of the nation's nuclear deterrent that is the bedrock of U.S. national security. (Photo: Sandia National Laboratories)*

**View the complete version of Admiral Haney's talk:**

[csis.org/multimedia/video-strategic-deterrent-forces-foundation-national-security](https://csis.org/multimedia/video-strategic-deterrent-forces-foundation-national-security)